

OPPOSE HB 25

Public Schools - Sexually Explicit Materials - Prohibited in Libraries and Media Centers

Ways and Means Committee

Wednesday, January 31, 2024

UNFAVORABLE

Chair Atterbeary and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Kahlil Wilson, and I am writing to you today as a concerned high school student of Baltimore City Public Schools and a peer educator within a city youth advisory council for sexual and reproductive health. I am being supported by my council's advisor and a MSW graduate student at the University of Maryland, Baltimore who is connected to the council as well.

I was alerted that Carroll County passed a policy recently banning sexually explicit books from their county public school libraries, and that this bill—HB 25—is now trying to ban sexually explicit books from *all* public school libraries and media centers in Maryland. My being a young native Marylander, living both in the city and counties of Maryland throughout my life, I strongly believe that this bill will harm students by stopping them from learning about important things that they need and want to know.

'Sexually explicit' can mean something to one person, and then something else to a different person with a different point of view. The world itself is full of explicit media today. When something is labeled as 'explicit,' it's a warning to the audience of mature content, and once again, 'mature,' can be seen differently depending upon the different points of view of different people.

When something is 'sexually explicit' it means it's about sexual activity. But sexual activity should be normalized and talked about more in the school system because of the pregnancies and STD/STI transfers among young adults that I see and hear about, some of who are sadly not equipped with the knowledge needed to understand sexual activity. But, it's not the youth's fault. If something isn't talked about, they are going to be curious and want to know more about it; it's human nature. That's what books are for. Books are a form of media used for many things, but mostly they are used to educate.

Maybe a parent or adult feels like minors shouldn't be reading books about sexual activity because they feel there's no need for their child or children to know about that kind of information, or maybe they don't like the thought of some children having to be or being mature. The whole point of books is that there are many different types for the many different types of people. We shouldn't exclude or limit something just because some feel something is inappropriate to them, but to others it's seen as normal.

Thank you. I hope you vote "NO" to this bill.